

## Guide to leading Erev Shabbat Services at Congregation Beth Israel

Erev Shabbat services at Congregation Beth Israel have a long tradition marked by informality, spontaneity and discussion. We build community, share the experience of welcoming Shabbat, and get better acquainted with one another. We encourage members to learn about the meaning and structure of this service, and occasionally lead the service along with the Rabbi or when the Rabbi is not scheduled.

Creating and leading a service gives you the opportunity to learn and share something with our community and to be creative about finding ways for people to engage with the opening hours of Shabbat. The service provides a space for connecting, refreshing, learning and remembering for all who join together in that moment. This guide provides an introduction to help you understand the parts of the service and some details to think about when planning and conducting an Erev Shabbat service.

### **Goals for Shabbat services:**

- To celebrate and honor Shabbat.
- To promote community and interaction between congregants: Share something that is meaningful to you (reading, prayer, experience). Create the opportunity for others to share something with the group (e.g. something good from their week, upcoming plans/hopes, their thoughts on the topic you are presenting). This may work better with smaller groups. Try seating arrangements that might encourage dialogue and connection (circle, oval).
- To be intellectually and spiritually challenging: Try to get congregants to think about something in a different way; encourage them to experience the awe and wonder of the universe in a new way.
- Spiritually supportive and emotionally nurturing: We all have moments when we are struggling and can be bolstered by being together.
- To provide an opportunity to say Mourner's *Kaddish* with one's community.

### **Guidelines and Tips:**

For some leaders, it may be helpful to have an overarching mood, theme or discussion topic in mind for the service. This theme may help you choose the readings, meditations/intentions and tunes for some prayers (contemplative if you are doing a more meditative service, peppy if that is the mood you are setting, etc). The service structure itself has some built-in ebbs and flows, but you might not want to have your peppiest tune follow a somber guided meditation or *kavannah* (intention).

The Reconstructionist prayerbook is full of possible additional readings and poetry, both near the particular prayers and in the back of the book. And don't feel limited by what is in the *siddur*: Feel free to be creative. Use different poems or readings in place of psalms or blessings. Bring a few one-line phrases that help to set the mood for certain prayers or moments in the service. Use meditation or movement if you are comfortable doing so. Bring a new tune and introduce it with a *niggun* (wordless melody) sung slowly and with some repetition so others can catch on.

The services should typically be 75 - 80 minutes, with a maximum of 90 minutes. The length of your *d'var* (discussion/presentation) will guide your choices for the rest of the service. If you plan a longer discussion, you will need to keep the other sections shorter, while recognizing that all "blocks" of the service need to be represented. Feel free to review your service outline or *d'var* plans with an experienced service leader or one of the RPC co-chairs or the Rabbi.

### **How to Build a Service:**

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Understanding the core “blocks” of the service can help when making your service outline. A weekday *Ma’ariv* (evening) service has a core of two blocks; these are the *Sh’ma* and her blessings (*Barchu*, creation, revelation, redemption) and the *Amidah* (standing prayer). On *Erev Shabbat* (Shabbat evening), a “warm up” section (*Kabbalat Shabbat*) is added which precedes the *Barchu/Sh’ma*. The service finishes with concluding prayers. Within each section, you can choose the prayers or readings that speak to you. Each section of the service builds on the previous one to bring us spiritually to our *Amidah* section. Here is a brief outline of the service:

Kabbalat Shabbat	Songs & Psalms	p. 3 - 53
Hatzi Kaddish	Transition	p. 55
Sh’ma and Her Blessings	Intellectual section: themes of creation, revelation, redemption	p. 57 - 85
Amidah (Standing Prayer)	Individual prayer time	p. 90 - 107 sometimes to p. 113
Full Kaddish	Transition	p. 115
D’var (Discussion)		
Concluding Prayers		p. 119 - 135

### **Detailed Information for Each Section of the Service:**

**Kabbalat Shabbat:** This is often referred to as the physical section of the service, using song and/or movement to get the body ready for the following sections of the service.

- **Candlelighting** (p.3 - 5): Blessing the candles shifts us into the holy space of *Shabbat*. Some leaders invite everyone up to the *Bimah* to bless the candles; some invite the oneg host (s) or someone else to lead the blessing. There are many possible readings to help set the mood, if desired.
- **Songs/Psalms** (p. 6 - 53): Singing together joyously helps to bring people into a *Shabbat* mood. Some popular choices include: *Yedid Nefesh* (p.7), *Shalom Aleichem* (p.13), *Dodi Li* (p.19), *Lechu Nerananah* (p.21), *Shiru Ladonay* (p.25), *Yismechu HaShamayim* (p.27), *Tov L’hodot* (p.49), *Tzadik Katamar* (p.51). Most people will choose to do some form of ***Lecha Dodi*** (p.41-47) since this song is so closely associated with welcoming Shabbat as a bride and queen. There are many tunes for any of these (and others). Feel free to pick tunes you like or to learn and/or teach a new one to the group. When teaching a new tune, it can be helpful to teach it to a few people in advance (so they can help you sing it that day) or introduce it as a wordless niggun so people can first learn the melody without words.

**Hatzi Kaddish** (p.55): This is a transition or punctuation mark for this section of the service, you can think of it like a comma before the *Sh’ma* section. Some leaders will honor someone else by having them lead this prayer, allowing them time to prepare if necessary. You may consult with the RPC chairs or Rabbi for suggested people. If you do not have a *minyán*, this prayer would be omitted.

**Sh’ma and Her Blessings:** This is often referred to as the intellectual section of the service. In this section, we learn about God/Godliness using the central story of the Jewish people with blessings about creation/nature, revelation and redemption. Each of these three blessings has a final closing statement (called the *chatimah* or “seal”), often marked with an asterisk. Whichever method you choose to mark these blessings, it is good to close with that final line (in English or Hebrew). At the heart is the *Sh’ma* itself (sometimes called an affirmation) and its three (or four) paragraphs of *Torah*.

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- **Barchu** (p.57): This section begins with a call to worship where we invite one another into the “official” part of the service. Some people choose to do introductions here, or invite people to look around at the gathered *kahal* (community). If you do not have a *minyan*, omit the *Barchu* and continue with *Asher Bidvaro*.
- **Creation/Nature Blessing** (p.59 *Asher Bidvaro*): One of the ways that people understand and connect with God/Godliness is through an appreciation of nature. Feel free to use the poetry within the prayerbook or other sources or invite people to share times when they have felt the presence of God/Godliness through nature. End with the chatima in Hebrew marked with an asterisk, or the English “Blessed are you, Almighty One, who makes the evening fall.”
- **Revelation Blessing** (p.63 *Ahavat Olam*): This blessing recognizes the presence of God’s love in the world. For Jewish people, receiving the gift of the *Torah* can be a sign of this love. End with the chatima in Hebrew marked with an asterisk, or the English “Blessed are you, Beloved One, who loves your people Israel.”
- **Sh’ma and Ve’ahavta** (p.65 - 73): An affirmation of God’s oneness, followed by paragraphs of *Torah* teaching us ways to understand God/Godliness. You might choose poetry to read after the *Ve’ahavta* or allow time for people to read the next paragraphs individually. End on p.73 with “Adonai Elohaychem Emet.”
- **Redemption** (p.79): In the final blessing of the *Sh’ma*, we understand God/Godliness as redeemer. By singing *Mi Chamocha*, we put ourselves in that moment of being freed from slavery in Egypt and we can use that energy when facing our own challenges. We often chant this entire page in Hebrew.
- **Hashkivenu** (p.80 - 83): Asking for peace during the night to come. End with the *chatima* or final line on p. 80 (English) or 81 (Hebrew).
- **Veshamru** (p.85): This prayer is a special addition when it is *Shabbat*.

**Amidah (Standing Prayer)** (p.90 - 107): This is the spiritual pinnacle of the service. If the *Sh’ma* section is understood to be about God/Godliness, this is the moment when we take our individual time to be present with God/That Which is Beyond Us. There may be poetry or *kavannot* that you offer to provide an intention, but it is important to allow some silent space for people to have individual prayer time. You may start with *Adonay S’fatai* (p. 90), then allow quiet time, conclude with *Shalom Rav* (p. 105) or *Oseh Shalom* (p. 107). Occasionally, people will add in the brief repetition of the *Amidah*, which begins with *Vayhulu* (p. 109) and *Me’eyn Sheva* (p. 111 - 113).

**Full Kaddish** (p.115): Another transition or punctuation mark, a period on the core section. If you do not have a *minyan*, this prayer would be omitted.

**Drash/D’var (Discussion)**: This can take many forms: a *d’var* based on some commentary of *Torah* (printed out and read or off the cuff from notes); a conversation or discussion; a play or bibliodrama. The key to a *d’var/derash* is asking questions. Don’t pretend that you have the answers, although you may offer suggestions. Encourage curiosity and the urge to learn more. Quote a line or phrase from the *Torah* where appropriate.

### **Concluding Prayers:**

- **Kiddush** (p.119): This could be offered to someone in the congregation or the oneg host (s).

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- **Aleinu** (p.121 - 125): Another great place for readings or thoughts on what we can do for *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).
- **Mourner's Kaddish** (p.131): We usually invite people to share the name (s) of who they are remembering. Traditionally, this prayer would be omitted if you do not have a *minyan*. However, many leaders would be lenient in counting, especially if someone came to say mourner's *kaddish*. In that case, the service leader might ask the permission of the community to say mourner's *kaddish* without a *minyan*.
- **Announcements:** Often presented by a board member. It is good to know of a couple of upcoming things in case they can't make it. Please also thank the oneg host (s); you can find the names on the wall in the office.
- **Concluding Song (s):** *Adon Olam* (p.133) or *Yigdal* (p.135) are some common choices.
- *Motzi*.

### **Some Final Notes:**

Service leaders bring their own strengths to the services that they lead. Use those strengths when planning your service. In addition, we all have some weaknesses and it can be helpful to pair up with someone who has strengths in some of your weak areas. For example, if you are less comfortable leading the singing, invite someone musical to do that with you. You could plan the service together or ask that person to act as your "*chazzan* (singer)", singing what you ask them. It can be enriching to pair up with someone for fun or any number of other reasons. You are not expected to be the rabbi. Bring what *you* can to the service as an *avodah* (sacred service) to our community. Thank you.

### **Sample Service Outlines and Discussions:**

Here are a few sample service outlines. Others may be obtained by contacting the synagogue office.

#### **SERVICE NO. 1**

##### **Kabbalat Shabbat:**

Shalom Aleichem BI melody to gather people together p. 13

Candlelighting done by Oneg hosts

Reading by Marge Piercy p. 2

Candlelighting p. 5

Sing Shabbat Shalom

Yismechu Hashamayim p. 27

Lecha Dodi p. 41 (BI melody)

leads introductions and sharing something good from the week

Tov L'hodot p. 49

Hatzi Kaddish p. 55 (Linda Cohen)

##### **Ma'ariv:**

Barchu p. 57

Asher Bidvaro Chatimah p. 59

Ahavat Olam p. 63

Sh'ma p. 65; next two paragraphs individually

Adonai Eloheichem Emet p. 73

Mi Chamocha p. 79 traditional version

Hashkivenu English p. 80; followed by Ufros Aleinu/Chatimah

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Veshamru p. 85

Adonai s'fatai tiftach p. 91; followed by silent Amidah p. 91 -107

Oseh shalom p. 107

Kaddish Titkabal p. 115

### **D'var/Discussion**

#### **Concluding Prayers:**

Kiddush p. 119

Aleinu p. 121-125 (Read English p. 127)

Mourner's Kaddish p. 131

Announcements

Yigdal p. 135

### **SERVICE NO 2**

#### **Prelude**

Shalom Aleichem (traditional) as we walk in from outside.

A reading to precede candlelighting, p. 2 the first reading

Candlelighting, p. 5 (someone from congregation)

Shabbat Shalom

#### **Kabbalat Shabbat**

Dodi Li p. 19; Shiru Ladonay p. 25; Lecha dodi p. 41 (rock tune)

Emma Lazarus reading on p. 821 (give to someone in congregation)

Tov L'hodot or Mah Gadlu, p. 49

#### **Hatzi Kaddish p. 55**

#### **Ma'ariv**

Barchu p. 57

Asher Bidvaro, p. 58 in English (congregation in unison), followed by

Umaavir ...

Ahavat Olam p. 63

Sh'ma, p. 65

Mi Chamocha p. 79

Hashkivenu p. 80 (congregation in unison), followed by Ufros Aleinu

Amidah p. 91 - 107

Kaddish Titkabal p. 115

**Discussion:** Your choice

#### **Concluding Prayers**

Kiddush p. 119

Aleinu p. 121

Reading on p 127 (congregation in unison)

Mourner's Kaddish p. 131

Adon Olam p. 133 (tune of America the Beautiful)